

CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE

PUBLIC WORK SESSION

WEDNESDAY, April 11, 2012

WILLIAM A. BRIGGS BUILDING (REED CONFERENCE ROOM)

845 PARK AVENUE

EXECUTIVE SESSION: 6:00 P.M.

**PUBLIC WORK SESSION IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE
SESSION**

PUBLIC SESSION IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING PUBLIC MEETING

MINUTES

The Cranston School Committee Public Work Session was held on the above date with the following members present: Chairperson Iannazzi, Mr. Lombardi, Mrs. McFarland, Mrs. Ruggieri, Mr. Traficante, Mr. Bloom and Mrs. Culhane. Attorney Ronald Cascione was also present.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. and convened to Executive Session pursuant to RI State Laws PL 42-46-5(a)(1) Personnel; PL 42-46-5(a)(2) Collective Bargaining and Litigation; (Ahlquist vs. Cranston School Committee), (Contract Negotiations' Update – Custodians, Secretaries), (Maintenance of Effort), (Consideration of legal options regarding status of aid to education appropriation and legal advice relating to same).

Call to Order – Public Session was called to order at 6:18 p.m.

The roll was called; a quorum was present; however, Mr. Bloom will be leaving shortly for another appointment.

Public Work Session:

e. Building Assessment & Evaluation Study of the Cranston Area Career and

Technical Center for the Cranston School Department. (This Report is on file

in the Superintendent's Office with these minutes) (Letter from Carolyn Dias,

Chief Fiscal Integrity and Efficiencies, from the RI Department of Education is

also on file in the Superintendent's Office)

Superintendent Nero

As you know, last year we received \$152,000 grant from the Department of Ed. to do a feasibility study if we were to purchase from the State, the building. At that time, Mr. Zisseron handled everything with the architect and engineers and got a report back which is in your packet. Mr. Zisseron will go over what was suggested we pay to bring the building up to code to buy the building. Also received tonight is a letter from Carolyn Dias telling us what she is going to give us, which is significantly different. Mr.

Zisseron and I have spent time on the phone with Vanessa Cooley and with Joseph da Silva and the issue is going to be that Cranston East and Cranston West, with everything being equal; Cranston West was placed on warning for facilities for the Career & Tech. Center. I'm concerned about their accreditation with NEASC and the feasibility of purchasing this building and doing the right thing. At this time, Mr. Zisseron spoke on the above report.

Mr. Zisseron

We received two grants for \$153,000 to hire the engineer to design the heat/vac system for the Vocational School, which has been a very serious problem. The Department of Ed. hired an environmental company about 3 or 4 years ago to come and do an assessment of the building and the report was not a good report. They recognized that fact. It will cost approximately \$1.5 million to bring upgrades to that school as far as environmental problems go. This includes heating, A.C., and air movement. We then went out and had a feasibility study done for the building itself on what the building needed structurally. This was done by Saccoccio & Associates and that came in at roughly \$2.2 million. This would be a total of \$3.7 million to bring the building up to code.

RIDE is very anxious for us to take over the building. This would turn it over to us for care and maintenance; that's one issue. The second issue is that they are holding HVAC over our heads. He explained his conversation that he had today with Mr.

da Silva regarding these monies. Mr. Zisseron stated that they wanted to give us \$1.5 million this year for the HVAC system and then another \$350,000 toward the \$2.2 million and then the year after that - \$533,000; the year after that \$50,000. In essence, they are giving us only \$900,000 to do the structural work, i.e. the windows, elevator, etc. Mr. Zisseron noted that he asked what would happen if the School Committee does not want the building; what happens with HVAC system because it's needed and the report shows that it's needed. The statement to Mr. Zisseron was that they would offer some of that money to Warwick and they will do some stuff in the building but not what is completely needed in the building. A discussion ensued in regards to the report and the letter from RIDE.

Superintendent Nero

We looked over the report. At some point we have to sit down with our Delegation and tell them to be fair.

Mrs. Culhane asked that if we decided to do that, what would be the financial impact to the District because there are still going to be some students that want a Vocational education. Do we have an estimate as to what the financial impact would look like?

Mr. Nero answered that there are a lot of issues that you would have

to look at if you were to decide not to own the program. First of all, the building would close; we don't own the parking lot so we would have issues there. The second thing would be, what do they want to do with that building? A discussion ensued referring to what would happen if we did not own the building.

Mr. Lombardi asked at what point does the HVAC issue become a safety issue to the children in that school. Mr. Zisseron answered that we're about 75% there at this time. Mr. Zisseron went through what some of the more severe problems are, noting that there are some real issues with that building.

Mrs. Ruggieri

Currently we don't own this building. There are things in this report that state that we are not meeting ADA codes, acceptability codes; we are in violation of certain codes, etc. What is preventing us....this is a State building that is in violation of all of these codes. Just on those items alone, don't we have any kind of leverage? A lengthy discussion ensued.

Ms. Iannazzi

With all due respect to our legislative delegation who approves the budget, I think that we should at least be briefing the Cranston Legislative Delegation. Mr. Lombardi noted that we have to call the Dept. of Ed. to task on this now. Several comments were made by the committee.

Mrs. Ruggieri pointed out some of the kitchen violations alone and how serious they are. She also pointed out how amazing the students and the programs are and we should take the next step now!

Mr. Traficante noted that the same issues were going on 4-5 years ago when they met with Jim DiPrete. Ms. Iannazzi stated that she, Mr. Traficante and Ms. Coutu also met in Senator Gallo's office over the same issue.

It was decided that the committee will meet with the legislature first and continue with whatever step has to come after that. Even more so, there is now a report that points everything out and is documented. Mrs. Culhane also pointed out that Cranston Career & Tech is not treated the same as other Career & Technical schools throughout the State and they had nothing to offer us. Mr. Zisseron stated that over the last few years, they have basically walked away from this school. There is something about any thing over \$300 that they are supposed to take care of but there have been a lot of times that he sends his guys in. He knows that if he doesn't do it with his crew, it's not going to get done. These are our kids; he will send his people in for their safety. Mr. Zisseron reiterated that they want us to take over the building and they are waving that \$1.5 million and instead of the \$2.2 million, they're waving \$900,000. Also, the City has to agree to take over the building. We don't own buildings.

Mrs. Ruggieri requested if the administration could add some kind of fiscal impact to Cranston Public Schools; what it would look like; maybe a worst case scenario of what it would do for lost tuitions; what it would cost us to place a certain portion of our kids, etc.

Mr. Nero stated that the biggest issues are going to be the logistical issues with facilities.

Mr. Lombardi noted that from a legal perspective, we have to make this about health and safety; forget the parking issue and forget any hypothetical's on what they will do with the building. The kids, the class size and the safety of the kids is paramount in this issue.

Park View Middle School Sign/Grant Opportunity

Joseph Rotz – Principal of Park View Middle School

Through our school improvement team we have been talking about updating pieces of the building at different times of the year and we talked about the sign in front of the building. Some of our committee members have talked about possibly speaking to Mr. Feinstein about the sign. This is how it all started. (Please see memo and attachment from Mr. Rotz; on file in the Superintendent's office)

He just wanted to clarify for everyone present that at no time was Mr. Feinstein looking to re-name Park View Middle School. He figured that we would just recognize all of the donated funds and all of the hard work that he has done. He has really been instrumental in all of

the extra curriculum activities that are going on at the school right now. It was noted that included in the Park View Middle School sign would be “Home of the Feinstein Junior Scholars” and they went back and forth with the kind of donation would be made from Mr. Feinstein. The logistics are all in the memo from Mr. Rotz dated February 8, 2012. He noted that it would be a \$50,000 grant and then a \$10,000 grant annually through the Feinstein Foundation. Mr. Traficante asked if this would all be in writing and Mr. Rotz answered that, yes, it would all be in writing. The reason Mr. Rotz wanted to come tonight was to speak to the committee in regards to this grant and future grants from Mr. Feinstein.

Mr. Traficante stated that he will support this; however, only if it is in black and white; he pointed out some of his experiences when he was Mayor of this City. The committee agreed that they will back this proposal 100% if this offer is in writing. A discussion ensued.

Mr. Nero suggested that our attorney, Ronald Cascione, be in the meeting with Mr. Feinstein when they do meet.

Mr. Nero

While Mr. Ault is setting up for his presentation, Mr. Nero spoke on: Discussion to go ahead with an RFP for a Comprehensive Athletic Training Service Vendor – Mr. Nero received a call from the Interscholastic League several months ago from the head of the Interscholastic League. They wanted to sit down with a company

called The Foundry Medicine. They are doing something with school districts where they come in and they provide a certain amount of service for training for injuries and things like that. It would be free of charge except for the fact that the kids who are treated would be referred to their practice. He noted that he is not realizing at the time that we presently have someone who does that in the district and gets some of the rewards too. After looking at a comprehensive program, he noted that we have no program for all of these different issues that come up. If these things are free and this young lady met with him and noted that she feels that we are stealing from her in a sense that she has been doing this for a while, Mr. Nero thought that maybe it would be a good idea to put out an RFP for services. We're asking for the ability to float an RFP in this matter.

Mr. Michael Traficante – A.D.

Mr. Traficante feels that the tremendous upgrade would be having an athletic trainer on site for two or three days per week at both schools from approximately 2:30 – 4:30. They would offer classes; they would teach coaches how to specifically tape ankles, etc. The bottom line is that we don't have a trainer on-site because it would be too expensive. This would be a tremendous upgrade for our athletes. They do physicals to all our athletes in the City on a Saturday during the summer. At this time, there being no objection to the RFP, it was decided to send out an RFP for this Athletic Training Service.

Presentation on Mason's CARE Masonic Model Student Assistance

Program

Richard Ault

At this time, Mr. Ault introduced Mr. Earl J. Washburn, Executive Director of the National Masonic Foundation for Children. Mr. Washburn presented and showed a CD of this program which is on file in the Superintendent's office. Also see Brochure and Update flyer attached and on file in the Superintendent's office.

A brief explanation of this program is as follows:

NMFC (National Masonic Foundation for Children) is a 501©(3), non profit, charitable organization supported by Masonic Grand Lodges, allied Masonic organizations and other caring and concerned individuals and organizations.

The primary mission of the National Masonic Foundation for Children is to work with Grand Lodge jurisdictions in order to offer the Masonic Model Student Assistance Program (MMSAP) to schools throughout our nation so that the youth of this country may lead productive, useful, and healthy lives.

After the presentation, Mr. Washburn pointed out that this is not only an alcohol and drug abuse program; over the 26 years they have been in business, they now address the social, emotional spectrum that is a child's life at school nowadays. It's mental; it's physical; it's

bullying; it's diversity; it's the question of suicide tendencies; and it really caught his attention that young people would take their own lives. He spoke on this issue at length. This program is talking about attendance, academics, health and behavior also. Within that scope, in our schools, he thinks an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure! They believe that the best treatment is prevention. Mr. Washburn also spoke on a three year study they had of the effects of this training showing it affects seven children during the course of a school year. They have made a positive impact on over ½ million children. This program is one of the top student assistance trainings in the Country. They would love to have Cranston be the pilot school in Rhode Island to introduce this. The masons of Rhode Island, through their grand lodge, are very generous and show a lot of interest and they want to pay the bill for this. They will pay for the trainers; they will pay for the trainings that the teachers will have. The thing the school system would be exposed to would be the substitutes while our teachers are out of the school building. That may also be negotiable.

Ms. Iannazzi

Ms. Iannazzi asked if the program was limited exclusively to educators. The reason she was asking is that, working with the court system, they have social workers in their drug court program and also they have social workers that work with kids in DCYF care and she was wondering if they opened up training to that type of system. Mr. Washburn answered that they do have a couple of states that the

State Police come in; they've had other alcohol and drug abuse people come into their trainings. It's open to the core team in the school systems and other systems. It comes down to anybody in the schools system that comes in contact with kids, i.e. bus drivers, custodians, secretaries, school nurses, etc. It's advantageous for anyone.

At this time, Mr. Nero stated that they really have to sit down and study this program. He noted that the school department has just made a tremendous investment in PBIS and our teachers have gone to training both on Fridays and Saturdays, which is similar to what you're showing. They do work with CCAP and other organizations that they already have. Right now they have to be careful that they're not going to put programs in that are going to be counter-productive to programs that we presently have and in the same token when we talk about substitutes and the fact that we already have teachers leaving the building for the DANA Center for Math and Science. He has to be careful before we jump the gun and start looking at all these things. A discussion ensued regarding the different programs we already have, etc.

Mr. Washburn noted that if anyone would like to do a little more checking, they may want to go to the website: www.masonicmodel.org which lists their training schedules and the states that do training, etc. Mrs. Culhane asked if the qualifications for trainers are listed anywhere on the website or in the literature. Mr.

Washburn noted that the training is done by Newman Stecker International and you could find the qualifications at that website.

Mrs. McFarland asked what kind of third party evaluations that have measurable outcome have you been successful with. Mr. Washburn answered that they are trying to compile that information now. They've been in this for 25 years; they send out a lot of surveys; confidentiality is a big part of their program. There's some information that they just do not have access to. They tell their people, when they send the surveys out, that they don't want names; they want numbers. He went on to explain this to the committee. Mr. Washburn also noted that this program fits into RTI also. Mr. Nero reiterated that the PBIS is a prelude to part of the RTI process. He noted that the program seems great but we are presently in the third year of the PBIS system. He also noted that tomorrow he is filming another commercial with CCAP because we are involved with this local agency.

SEAC By-Laws (Formerly SEPAB)

Cheryl Coogan (Hand-out) New SEAC By-Laws attached to these meeting notes

(Please see By-Laws regarding RI Specific Regulations)

Mrs. Coogan explained that they updated the by-laws by the parent group. The parent groups updated by-laws for them. She has had nothing updated since 1998. One of the things that resulted from that

was the document (Page 112) that she just handed out to the committee. The first thing that occurred was a change in the name. What she handed out was the State and Federal regulations. The Parent Advisory Board has never been part of the regulation name. It's always been Local Advisory Committee. That is the primary change that the committee will see. Most of the changes were recommended by Debra Langa from RIPEN who did the training with them. Mrs. Coogan sat down with the group and went through and recommended changes and then Attorney Mary Ann Carroll also made recommendations to changes in the by-laws. It's a mutual agreement between Deb, Mary Ann, Mrs. Coogan and the co-chairs of the group. The document in front of us is from a mutually agreed upon document.

The final product is from the Parent Advisory Committee to RIPEN and then finally to Attorney Carroll. This is the legal document of where the by-laws have come from.

Monthly Review of Year-to-Date Expenditures

Joseph Balducci

Mr. Balducci sent out last week the Financial Reports from March. He noted that there were no surprises as compared to the month of February. The same suspects continue to cause us problems. Mrs. McFarland asked about the Medicaid Reimbursement. Mr. Balducci answered that they are actually finalizing receipt of last years monies and they have a meeting scheduled next week. He noted that they are moving on target. Mr. Nero added that PCG has sat down with them

and they are having a Medicaid audit this year. They've been extremely helpful getting ready for that this summer. He noted that we're on the right track with this.

Mrs. Culhane asked how long of a contract did we issue to them. It was answered that we gave them a 3-year contract.

Mr. Balducci added that on the revenue side the Vocational tuition seems to be a major concern again. He explained this to the committee. On the expenditure side, Mr. Balducci reported that everything looks good. He reviewed the summary page of the expenditures with the committee that shows the major areas and percentage-wise how we are doing against the budget. Through the month of March we should be approximately 75% of our budget used.

The only area that we are trending a little higher than that is in the Plant area. Other than that everything else seems to be coming in below. Mr. Balducci went on to explain the Special Ed Tuitions. He also explained the Utilities part to the committee.

The resolution that was passed last month asking the Council to consider adjusting our utilities if they adjust theirs was discussed.

Adjourn Public Work Session to Public Meeting

A motion was made by Mr. Lombardi to adjourn to the Public Meeting.

The motion was seconded by Mrs. Culhane and unanimously carried.

It was reported out that no votes were taken in Executive Session.

Executive Session Minutes Sealed – April 11, 2012 – Motion made to seal the minutes by Mr. Lombardi, seconded by Mrs. Culhane and unanimously carried to seal the minutes of the April 11, 2012 Executive Session.

Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss in the Public Meeting, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank S. Lombardi

School Committee Clerk